WE CLAIM:

1. A method of controlling distribution of content through a communications network, the method comprising steps of:

receiving a request message for the content sent by a party through the communications network, the request message including information identifying the party;

formulating a transaction indicia uniquely associated with the request message;

conveying the transaction indicia to the party through one of a parallel network and the communications network using the information identifying the party; and

receiving a validation message containing the transaction indicia returned by the party through the other of the communications network and the parallel network.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the transaction indicia is used for validating only one request for content.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the transaction indicia has a limited time to live and the content is not delivered unless the validation message is received before the time to live has expired.

4. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the information identifying the party comprises at least one of:

an address of the party on the parallel network;

a User ID; and

a user password.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of formulating a transaction indicia comprises a step of authenticating a right of the party to receive the content.

6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the step of authenticating a right of the party to receive the content comprises a step of determining whether the party is located within a predetermined domain.

7. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the predetermined domain comprises at least one of:

a predetermined geographical region;

a service area of a network service provider;

a company employee; and

an Internet domain.

8. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the step of determining whether the party is located within a predetermined domain comprises a step of using the information identifying the party to query a database that stores domain information related to the party.

9. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of conveying the transaction indicia to the party

through the one of the communications network and the parallel network comprises steps of:

establishing a connection to the party through the one of the communications network and the parallel network using the information identifying the party; and

conveying the transaction indicia to the party through the connection.

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the step of establishing the connection to the party through the one of the communications network and the parallel network comprises a step of determining an address of the party on the one of the communications network and the parallel network.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the step of determining an address of the party on the one of the communications network and the parallel network comprises a step of using the information identifying the party to query a database that stores address information associated with a device on the one of the communications network and the parallel network.

12. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the parallel network is the public switched telephone network (PSTN), and the step of establishing a connection with the party through the parallel network comprises setting up a call connection between an interactive voice response (IVR) unit and a telephone set associated with the party.

13. A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising steps of:

receiving information uniquely identifying a content delivery device associated with the party;

generating an encryption key using the information uniquely identifying the content delivery device;

encrypting the content using the encryption key; and

forwarding the encrypted content to the content delivery device associated with the party through the communications network.

14. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein the information uniquely identifying the content delivery device associated with the party comprises a media access control (MAC) address of the content delivery device.

15. A system for controlling distribution of content through a communications network, the system comprising:

means for formulating a transaction indicia uniquely associated with a request message received through the communications network from a party requesting content delivery;

means for conveying the transaction indicia to the party through one of the communications network and a parallel network; and

means for enabling the party to return the transaction indicia through the other of the communications network and the parallel network to initiate delivery of the content.

16. A system as claimed in claim 15, further comprising means for authenticating a right of the party to receive the content.

17. A system as claimed in claim 15 wherein the parallel network comprises any one of a switched telephone network, a frame relay network, and, an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) network.

18. A system as claimed in claim 16, wherein the means for authenticating a right of the party comprises means for converting a network address associated with the party into a domain, and means for determining whether the domain is a domain to which the content may be delivered.

19. A system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the means for converting a network address associated with the party comprises a database that relates domain information with the address associated with the party.

20. A system as claimed in claim 15, wherein the means for conveying the transaction indicia to the party through the parallel network comprises:

means for establishing a connection through the parallel network with customer premise equipment associated with the party; and

means for conveying the transaction indicia through the connection.

21. A system as claimed in claim 20 wherein the customer premise equipment is programmed to automatically

return the transaction indicia through the data network.

22. A system as claimed in claim 20, wherein the parallel network is the public switched telephone network (PSTN), and the means for establishing a connection to the party through the parallel network comprises setting up a call connection between an Interactive Voice Response unit (IVR) and a telephone set associated with the party.

23. A system as claimed in claim 20, wherein the parallel network is the public switched telephone network (PSTN), and the means for establishing a connection to the party through the parallel network comprises setting up a call connection between an Interactive Voice Response unit (IVR) and a facsimile machine associated with the party.

24. A system as claimed in claim 20, wherein the parallel network is the public switched telephone network (PSTN), and the means for establishing a connection to the party through the parallel network comprises setting up a call connection between an Interactive Voice Response unit (IVR) and an Analogue Display Services Interface (ADSI) telephone set associated with the party.

25. A system as claimed in claim 22, wherein the means for conveying the transaction indicia to the party through the connection comprises means for conveying the transaction indicia to the IVR and for prompting the IVR to communicate the transaction indicia to the party through the connection.

26. A system as claimed in claim 15, further comprising:

a program script for probing a content delivery device associated with the party to obtain information uniquely identifying the content delivery device;

a program script for generating an encryption key using the information uniquely identifying the content delivery device;

an algorithm for encrypting the content using the encryption key; and

an algorithm for decrypting the encrypted content delivered through the communications network to the content delivery device.

27. A system as claimed in claim 26, wherein the program script is configured to probe the content delivery device for a media access control (MAC) address of the content delivery device.